



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic
Abuse**
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA**
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence
Services**
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Willimantic, CT

Testimony Supporting

HB 5244, AAC Additional Housing Protections for a Victim of Family Violence or Sexual Assault

**Housing Committee
February 27, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We urge your support of HB 5244.

This bill will require landlords to change the locks on the individual dwelling unit of a survivor of domestic or sexual violence when they have a court-issued restraining or protective order, or civil protection order. The landlord would have two business days to comply with the request and is permitted to charge the actual reasonable cost of the lock change, including any fees paid for professional locksmith services, back to the tenant.

Additional protections are included for both the tenant (e.g., may change the locks themselves if the landlord does not comply) and landlord (e.g., may deduct the actual reasonable cost from the security deposit if the tenant does not pay for the lock change). The language also addresses offenders who reside in the dwelling unit and are listed as the respondent on an order of protection making it clear that the landlord shall neither provide them with a key to the new locks nor, given the existence of an order of protection excluding them from the resident, does the landlord have any duty under the rental agreement to give the respondent access to the unit.

Currently nothing in Connecticut law requires a landlord to change the locks of an individual dwelling unit at the request of a tenant when their safety is threatened. Unfortunately many survivors have had such a request denied by their landlord. For a survivor who has been granted a court order of protection it can be frightening to know that the person who is abusing them still has easy access to their home despite a court recognizing that this person poses a serious risk to them. Requiring landlords to change locks in these limited circumstances can have a significantly positive impact on what is a traumatic time for the tenant.

It is our intent with this proposal to provide a meaningful measure of safety and peace of mind for victims, while not making the lock change overly burdensome on landlords or have them bear the expense. Victims who have their locks changed can submit an application to the Judicial Branch Office of Victims Services for victim compensation to cover the cost of the lock change. According to the National Housing Law Project, 16 states (Arizona, Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin) and Washington, DC have laws requiring lock changes for survivors under certain circumstances. We urge you to support this bill and add Connecticut to that list.

Requested substitute language:

In line 17 we request that "two business days" be changed to "forty-eight hours" to better protect survivors who receive a restraining or protective order on Thursdays or Fridays
(OVER)

who, under the current language, may have to wait four days to have their locks changed.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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